



State of Connecticut

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February 8, 2011

Chairman Edwin Gomes, Chairman Larry Butler, Ranking Member John McKinney, Ranking Member Lawrence Miller and other distinguished Members of the Joint Committee on Housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of *SB 303, An Act Concerning Affordable Housing*, and *SB 606, An Act Concerning The Location Of Affordable Housing Units*.

The Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure – general statute, section 8-30g – made historic changes in the way courts review municipal zoning decisions concerning affordable housing. Since its enactment, many affordable dwellings have been created. However, some bad practices and unintended consequences have also emerged. Affordable housing developers can override municipal planning and zoning laws if a town's affordable housing stock is less than ten percent. Developers can appeal a denial by the local authorities and bring the decision before the courts. Unfortunately, many developers use this general statute as a way to build costly dense housing anywhere in towns across Connecticut without regard to the town's development plan.

SB 303 amends the statutes to allow a town to include existing apartments when calculating its number of affordable housing units. Developers may only use the current appeals procedure in towns where less than 10% of the housing stock is designated "affordable." Unfortunately, existing dwellings that meet guidelines for affordable housing are not counted when determining if the number of affordable housing units in a town meets this 10% threshold. Including these dwellings would give the state a more accurate number of affordable units.

SB 606 would give municipalities more control over housing by restricting the development of housing units to areas designated for them according to each town's development plan. Every town in Connecticut has its own identity and unique characteristics. This bill would allow municipalities to address their planning and zoning issues in ways that conform to their individual needs. By adopting this bill the General Assembly would help reduce the potential for sprawl and unsound zoning projects that threaten the environment and damage the historical landscape of our towns.

I understand that this is a complicated issue that presents many challenges. Thank you for your careful and thoughtful consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Toni Boucher
State Senator

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